and I'll be sworn he never saw him but once In the
Tilt-yard: and then he burst his head[5], for croud-

he was introduced into the early comedies: but it would be no easy task to maintain such an opinion. Nor is it by any means clear that Hamlet in calling his uncle a *vice* means to compare him to a *puppet orifactitious* image of majesty: but rather simply to a *buffoon*, or as he afterwards expresses it a *kind of shreds and patches*. The puppet shows had probably kings as well as *vices* in their dramas: and Hamlet might as well have called his uncle at once a *puppet king*.

What Mr. Steevens has said on this subject in a note to Twelfth Night, vol. XI. p. 479, deserves a little more consideration. He states, but without having favoured us with proof, that the vice *was always acted in a mask*: herein probably recollecting that of the modern Harlequin, the *illegitimate* successor to the old vice. But the mask of the former could have nothing to do with that of the latter, if he really wore any. Admitting however that he might, it is improbable that he should take his name from such a circumstance: and even then it would be unnecessary to resort with Mr. Steevens to the French word *vis*, which by the bye never signified a *mask*, when our own *visard*, i. e. a covering for the *visage*, would have suited much better.

A successful investigation of the origin and peculiarities of this singular theatrical personage would be a subject of extreme curiosity. The etymology of the word itself is all that we have here to attend to: and when the *vicious* qualities annexed to the names of the above character in our old dramas, together with the mischievous nature of his general conduct and deportment, be considered, there will scarcely remain a doubt that the word in question must be taken in its literal and common acceptation. It may be worth while just to state some of these curious appellations, such as shift, ambidexter, sin, fraud, vanity, covetousness, iniquity, prodigality, infidelity, inclination: and many others that are either entirely lost, or still lurk amidst the impenetrable stores of our ancient dramatick compositions. DOUCE.

[5] —he BURST his head.] Thus the folio and quarto. The modern editors read *broke*. To *break* and to *burst* were, in our

poet's time synonymously used. Thus Ben Jonson in his Poetaster translates the following passage in Horace:

> ——*fracta* pereuntes cuspide Gallos.
>
> "The lances *burst* in Gallia's slaughtered forces."

So, in The Old Legend of Sir Bevis of Hampton:

> "But syr Bevis so hard him thrust, that his shoulder-bone he *burst*."[1]

Again, in The Second Part of Tamburlaine, 1590: